



The Pipeline

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Inside this Issue:

QCC Spotlight: Kathy Hoffman

The ABCs of EAL

HIPAA to impact some CFC operations and activities

Log onto CFS Forum on Monday for live chat

Deadline for flex account claims is March 31



QCC Spotlight: Kathy Hoffman

By Janet Connor, DDS

GOTTA Question? A technical question relating to the Social Security disability program? Call Kathy Hoffman. She will have the answer. With more than 25 years dedicated to this program, she's been there, done that. Through her experience with policy and procedures and her contacts in various SSA components, Kathy has researched and advised on all kinds of case issues. She is the primary author of most of the Department for Disability Determination Services' supplements and office guidelines that have ensured our agency compliance with the POMS. (The POMS are the voluminous Social Security regulations this department must follow.) She is knowledgeable about the "weird stuff" in those rare situations that everyone else can't quite recall.

Over the years she has established a good rapport with SSA field office (FO) claims representatives and office managers. When the DDS has concerns with an FO procedure, Kathy is the person who works with her contacts at the FO and the SSA state director's office to develop win-win solutions. Kathy's work as a founding member of the EQIP Committee has created a model for efficient relations between the state DDS SSA field offices and the state director's office.

Since taking over the Operations Support Branch, Kathy has initiated team building in each unit, improving the work environment and increasing efficiency. Kathy recently took on the additional duty of overseeing the Louisville Branch Office until a new manager is named and is doing an excellent job. Her efforts are promoting consistency in processes and procedures between the Frankfort and Louisville Offices.

Not only has Kathy been sharing her time between two offices 50 miles apart, she loves sharing her nighttime baby-sitting grandchildren in Georgetown! Kathy is the mother of three wonderful children - Shelley, Gabe and Bill. Shelley has two children; Lucas is 4 and Leah is 2. Gabe has one child, Aidan, who is 2. And Bill has one child, Lexy who is also 2. Kathy has been known to take on the challenge of all four of them at once!

As you can tell, Kathy is an extremely giving individual, not only with her knowledge of the Social Security disability program but with her personal time. Kathy is very deserving of this Employee Spotlight!

The ABCs of EAL



"The ABCs of EAL" features tips that can help us improve our relationships with coworkers and our service to the families of Kentucky.

This week: T

Calling a **timeout** is one way to reinforce your commitment to Everyone a Leader's values. Timeouts can be used to ask questions, make statements and point out the need to use the basic principles. One of the Cabinet's ground rules is that anyone can call timeout without retribution. Your group can decide acceptable ways to call a timeout, such as a hand signal or pointing to an EAL poster.



HIPAA to impact some CFC operations and activities

*Information
privacy rules take
effect in April*



By Lisa Wallace, CFC Communications

Technological advances that make workplace communication and data transmission faster and more accurate also raise privacy and security concerns, especially with regard to health-related information.

Those concerns are reflected in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Also known as the Kennedy-Kassebaum Bill, HIPAA provides continuity of health-care coverage for persons who change jobs or health care plans, and it prohibits discrimination based on health status. It also ensures the security of electronic health data and the privacy of personal health information. The security provisions of HIPAA apply to all entities that bill and pay for health-care services or handle, maintain, transmit or access personally identifying health information.

HIPAA has been on CFC's radar screen since its passage. The law's requirements appear to apply to job functions in Protection and Permanency and, to a lesser and degree, Family Support, the Office of General Counsel, Office of Program Support and, possibly, the Division of Disability Determination Services.

HIPAA's portability provisions—the safeguards against loss or limitation of coverage when people change jobs—are already in effect. The deadline for compliance with the health information privacy portion is April 14.

All CFC workers should understand HIPAA's basic principles, and many employees will require more detailed knowledge of the law. Plans are being made to provide each employee with the appropriate information or specialized training. Much of the general information may be conveyed by e-mail and the CFC Web site. More intensive

training sessions will be held for staff performing functions covered by the law. Dates, times and locations for this training will be announced soon.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule requires covered entities to make reasonable efforts to limit the use or disclosure of protected health information to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose. Although only "covered entities" and their business associates must comply with all the rules of HIPAA, all Cabinet staff should be aware of the minimum disclosure rule with regard to protected health information of both clients and coworkers.

Although not directly addressed by HIPAA, practices such as using e-mail to notify staff of their fellow employees' health concerns or sick leave needs are being reviewed to determine if they violate the spirit of the law.

If it appears they do, employees may be asked to publish requests for sick leave donations only in the Cabinet's electronic newsletters, Pipeline and CFC Online, or on the Cabinet's intranet site—and then only after obtaining written authorization from the affected employee.

The Cabinet's compliance with HIPAA will also require physical safeguards, including such simple steps as relocating computer monitors so that passersby cannot easily view data displayed on the screen.

All affected Cabinet divisions are working to develop procedures that will help employees identify what information is and isn't "protected" and how best to handle interoffice electronic communication and other activities to avoid HIPAA violations.

Log onto CFS Forum on Monday for live chat

By Anya Armes Weber, CFC Communications

The next live chat on the CFS Forum Web site is Monday, Feb. 17.

Staff are invited to discuss "customer follow-up" in Comprehensive Family Services cases. After the families' initial goals are accomplished, what are the keys to successful follow-up meetings? How do staff and community partners encourage the customer to stay on track? How much time should staff devote to follow-ups, and is there evidence of lower recidivism when follow-ups are more substantial?

The discussion begins at 2 p.m. Eastern time. You must register to post a comment or question, and registering is easy. All staff can log on the site to read comments, which will remain online for staff who can't attend the discussion.

The CFS Forum is at <http://cfc.state.ky.us/cfsforum/>. Bookmark the site, and don't forget to log on next Monday!

Deadline for flex account claims is March 31

By Anya Armes Weber, CFC Communications

The deadline for claiming year 2002 flexible spending account funds is nearing.

Participants must file for reimbursement from their health-care and dependent day-care accounts before March 31. Request forms, receipts and appeals for last year's services must be received or postmarked by that date.

Stanley, Hunt, Dupree and Rhine - the 2002 account's administrator - has an automated phone line to check on balances and claims: (800) 413-6706. You must enter your Social Security number to get information. If you need to speak with an administrator, call (800) 403-2839.

You can check your account information online, too, at <https://www.online-enrollment.com/HDR/Login.asp>. You'll need your Social Security number and the four-digit personal identification number (PIN) from your quarterly statement.